

PHAROS

A beacon of hope in the darkness

Newsletter of the Reading Prostate Cancer Support Group (RPCSG)

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THE DECEMBER MEETING

The December meeting was again the Christmas Supper and Social event. This was attended by 65 people and was a great success. This year, we used the services of a catering company to provide the meal, and they did an excellent job, with several of their staff in attendance to help to serve the food, enabling all of our members to fully participate in the event. The company provided this at a very realistic price per head.

Between the courses a raffle was held, and then later a quiz. This had a Christmas theme, including some devious 'Dingbats' type of picture quiz. We also learned how difficult it is to listen to music backwards and identify the title!

NATIONAL PROSTATE CANCER AUDIT FOUND VAST AND WORRYING VARIATIONS IN TREATMENTS

The National Prostate Cancer Audit is an audit that has been commissioned and started work in April 2013, will run for 5 years, and in November 2014 issued its first report.

The report concluded that the NHS is failing to deliver the best diagnosis and treatment to thousands of men with prostate cancer, and says that there is a worryingly vast variation in access to advanced MRI scanning and the latest radiotherapy treatment.

Owen Sharp, chief executive of Prostate Cancer UK, called for prostate cancer services to be improved "without delay". He said that "Although there have been some improvements in access to the more sophisticated diagnosis and treatment

techniques, the audit reveals a worryingly vast variation in availability of these options and that around half of men with prostate cancer do not receive all the support services they should."

The audit found that diagnostic multiparametric MRI scans are available in only three out of four hospitals in England, and in only two thirds of Welsh hospitals. It also found that brachytherapy is available in only 20 per cent (11 out of 54) of radiation centres in England, and none in Wales. It said that high-dose brachytherapy should be made more widely available as a treatment option.

The report said that only one half of prostate cancer patients in England have access to necessary personal support services including cancer advisory centres, sexual function and continence advice, and psychological counselling.

Owen Sharp also said the findings could not be ignored and variations in care had to be tackled 'head on'.

You can read a media report on the audit in this web page:

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/nov/10/only-half-of-prostate-cancer-sufferers-receive-the-best-care-says-uk-audit>

The Prostate Cancer UK charity has some further detail of this audit, that you can read in this web page, which has some links to other interesting articles:

<http://prostatecanceruk.org/about-us/news-and-views/2014/11/national-prostate-cancer-audit-reveals-gaps-in-care>

NEXT MEETINGS

The January meeting will be held on the 2nd January 2015 at 18:30, but as usual for the January meetings, there will be no guest speaker. Instead it will be an opportunity to chat with other members, and of course to consume tea or coffee.

The February meeting will feature a talk by a radiographer from the RBH.

Best wishes for Christmas and New Year.

Steve Parkinson
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